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The following memo provides a summary of recent developments in public policy issues of interest to Early Childhood advocates.

Budget and Appropriations

On Tuesday evening, House and Senate Appropriations Committee members held a conference meeting to approve the first of two expected “mini-buses” to complete work on the FY 2010 appropriations process. The Transportation-Housing bill will serve as the vehicle for the first measure and provides funding for five other appropriations measures, including the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) bill. This first spending package of \$450 billion will finalize the appropriations process for all remaining FY 2010 appropriations bills, except for the Defense spending bill.

While the House and Senate must still approve the first package before it can be sent to the President to be signed into law, below is a table highlighting funding for a number of early childhood initiatives in the LHHS portion of the “minibus” bill:

Program	President’s Budget Request	House-Passed	Senate Appropriations Committee	FY 2010 Proposed Final
Promise Neighbor- hoods Program – supports a community-wide approach to lifting children out of poverty	\$10 million (new program)	\$10 million	\$10 million	\$10 million
Child Care and Development Block Grant	\$2.127 billion (same level as FY 2009)	\$2.127 billion	\$2.127 billion	\$2.127 billion
Community Services Block Grant Program - Grants to States	\$700 million (same level as FY 2009)	\$700 million	\$700 million	\$700 million

Head Start	\$7.235 billion (\$122 million above FY 2009)	\$7.235 billion	\$7.235 billion	\$7,235 million
Even Start	\$0	\$66.45 million (same level as FY 2009)	\$0	\$66.45 million
Title I (grants to LEAs)	\$12.992 billion (\$1.5 billion below FY 2009)	\$14.492 billion (same level as FY 2009)	\$13.792 billion (\$700 million below FY 2009)	\$14.492 billion

Healthcare Reform

While debate continued in the Senate on the health care reform bill, the real action was behind the scenes this week. Late Tuesday evening it was announced that Democratic Senators working to reach a compromise on a “public option” in the bill agreed on a compromise proposal. This proposal has now been sent to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to be scored. While all the details of the compromise have not yet been made public, this is a critical step in the health care reform debate as Democrats have been working to craft a reform measure that will garner 60 votes needed for passage. Additionally, news came this evening that President Obama is supportive of the proposed compromise.

According to *Congress Daily*, “Democrats dropped a public option that would allow states to opt out in favor of allowing those 55 to 64 years old to buy in to Medicare and permitting the federal government to negotiate coverage rates with private insurers on behalf of a national plan. [Additionally], The Office of Personnel Management would negotiate with insurers as it does now for federal employees.” Early childhood advocates will be watching closely as more information on the compromise becomes public.

In addition, there has been support in the community for an amendment authored by Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) that would make changes to State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) provisions in the bill and it is not yet known if changes to SCHIP have been included in the proposal sent to the CBO. With CBO estimated to take up to a week to score the tentative deal, the Senate looks increasingly likely to work through Christmas or into the following week. Bah humbug.

College Summit and Center for American Progress Release Report

On December 3, 2009, the Center for American Progress and College Summit sponsored a forum to release, “The Promise of Proficiency”, a white paper that proposes steps for the federal government to take to ensure that high schools are “fully empowered” to graduate students who are on a path of college and career proficiency. The publication focuses on the data high schools need from postsecondary institutions to increase graduation rates and college completion rates. The authors argue that secondary schools must expand their goal of simply graduating students to include college-readiness and career success, and the federal government must take targeted steps to institutionalize the promising trends put in place through the four assurances of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. According to J.B. Schramm, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of College Summit, in order for high schools to fully meet the demands of graduating students and the 21st century workforce, school leaders and teachers need data and measurement tools that will demonstrate college

proficiency rates—or how well students are doing the year after high school. To further emphasize the point, Schramm noted, “We wouldn’t let surgeons operate if they could only guess at how previous patients had done.” Martha J. Kanter, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, agreed. Delivering the keynote address, she stated that the country must change its picture of the “education pipeline” and make the connections between early learning, K-12, higher education and the workforce. The federal government must assist in the building of a sound infrastructure and the quality of learning, to create smooth transitions from birth to grade 12 to the workforce. In order to meet the President’s goal of becoming, once again, the nation with the highest percentage of college graduates by 2020, Kanter stressed the need to build partnerships with business and industry to establish a connected system of education in addition to doing a better job in using data, doing research and identifying best practices to improve outcomes throughout the system. For more information about the event and the additional comments of Emma Vadehra, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Department, U.S. Department of Education; Bethany Little, Chief Education Counsel, Senate HELP Committee; and Charles Thomas, Principal, Crossland High School, Prince George's County, Maryland go to: <http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2009/12/proficiency.html>.

Early Childhood Education Summit Convenes

On Tuesday, the Georgetown University Center for Health and Education, Zero to Three and the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development program of the U.S. Department of Education hosted a national summit, “The Science of Professional Development in Early Childhood Education.” The purpose of the summit was to identify emerging knowledge, critical gaps in knowledge and research and policy opportunities with regard to effective professional development for teachers, as well as promote implementation of evidence-based practices. Speaking at the summit, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated once again his belief that high-quality preschool programs can create level playing fields for all children and reiterated his support for funding for a new Early Learning Challenge Fund. Duncan also expressed support for cooperation between the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve early childhood education. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius also added support to the notion that the two agencies need to cooperate saying, “You can’t learn unless you are healthy.” According to Georgetown University, a webcast of the summit will be available shortly and the link to the event will be forwarded when provided.